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——*Dapibus, ſupremi*
Grata Teſtudo Jovis.—————— HOR.

IF there be truth in the common maxim, "That He deſerves beſt "of his country, who can make "two blades of graſs grow where "only one grew before," how truly commendable muſt it be (ſince it is ſo great a merit to provide for the beaſts of the field) to add to the ſuſtenance of man! and what praiſes are due to the inventor of a new diſh! By a new diſh, I do not mean the confounding, haſhing and diſguiſing of an old one; I cannot give that name to the French method of tranſpoſing the bodies of animals; ſerving up of fleſh in the ſkins of fiſh, or the eſſence of either in a jelly; nor yet to the Engliſh way of macerating ſubſtances, and reducing

ing all things to one uniform conſiſtency and taſte, which a good houſewife calls potting: for I am of opinion, that Lewis the fourteenth would not have given the reward he promiſed for the invention of a fixth order of architecture, to the man who ſhould have jumbled together the other five.

My meaning is, that as through neglect or caprice, we have loſt ſome eatables which our anceſtors held in high eſteem, as the heron, the bittern, the crane, and, I may add, the ſwan, it ſhould ſeem requiſite, in the ordinary revolution of things, to replace what has been laid aſide, by the introduction of ſome eatable which was not known to our predeceſſors. But though invention may claim the firſt praiſe, great honour is due to the reſtorer of loſt arts; wherefore if the earth does not really furniſh a ſufficient variety of untaſted animals, I could wiſh that gentlemen of leiſure and eaſy fortunes, would apply themſelves to recover the ſecret of fattening and preparing for the table, ſuch creatures, as from diſuſe, we do not at preſent know how to treat: and I ſhould think it would be a noble employment for the lovers of antiquity, to ſtudy to reſtore thoſe infallible reſources of luxury, the ſalt-water ſtews of the Romans.

Of all the improvements in the modern kitchen, there are none that can bear a compariſon with the introduction of Turtle. We are indebted for this delicacy, as well as for ſeveral others, to the generous ſpirit and benevolent zeal of the Weſt-Indians. The profuſion of luxury, with which the Creolian in England covers his board, is intended only as a foil to the more exquiſite dainties of America. His pride is to triumph in your neglect of the former, while he labours to ſerve you from the vaſt ſhell, which ſmokes under his face, and occaſions him a toil almoſt as intolerable, as that of the ſlaves in his plantations. But he would die in the ſervice rather than ſee his gueſts, for want of a regular ſupply, eat a morſel of any food which had not croſſed the Atlantic ocean.

Though it was never my fortune to be regaled with the true Creolian politeneſs, and though I cannot compliment my countrymen on their endeavours to imitate it, I ſhall here give my readers a moſt faithful account of

of the only turtle feaſt, I ever had the honour to be preſent at.

Towards the latter end of the laſt ſummer, I called upon a friend in the city, who, though no Weſt-Indian, is a great importer of Turtle for his own eating. Upon my entrance at the great gates, my eyes were caught with the ſhells of that animal, which were diſpoſed in great order along the walls; and I ſtopt ſo long in aſtoniſhment at their ſize and number, that I did not perceive my friend's approach, who had traverſed the court to receive me. However, I could find he was not diſpleaſed to ſee my attention ſo deeply engaged upon the trophies of his luxury. Come, ſays he, if you love turtle, I'll ſhew you a ſight; and bidding me follow him, he opened a door, and diſcovered ſix turtles ſwimming about in a vaſt ciſtern, round which there hung twelve large legs of mutton, which he told me were juſt two days proviſion for the turtle; for that each of them conſumed a leg of mutton every day. He then carried me into the houſe, and ſhewing me ſome blankets of a peculiar ſort, theſe, ſays he, are what the turtle lie in o'nights; they are particularly adapted to this uſe: I have eſtabliſhed a manufacture of them in the Weſt. But ſince you are curious in theſe matters, continued he, I'll ſhew you ſome more of my inventions. Immediately he unlocked a drawer, and produced as many fine ſaws, chizels and inſtruments of different contrivance, as would have made a figure in the apparatus of an anatomiſt. One was deſtined to ſtart a rib; another to ſcrape the callipaſh; a third to disjoint the vertebræ of the back-bone; with many others, for purpoſes which I could not remember. The next ſcene of wonder was the kitchen, in which was an oven, that had been rebuilt with a mouth of moſt uncommon capacity, on purpoſe for the reception of an enormous turtle, which was to be dreſt that very day, and which my friend inſiſted I ſhould ſtay to partake of. I would gladly have been excuſed; but he would not be denied; propoſing a particular pleaſure in entering a new beginner, and aſſuring me, that if I ſhould not happen to like it, I need not fear the finding ſomething to make out a dinner; for that his wife, though ſhe knew it would give him the greateſt pleaſure in the world, could never be prevailed on to taſte a ſingle morſel of turtle. He then carried me to the fiſh, which was to be the feaſt of the day,

day, and bid me obſerve, that though it had been cut in two full twenty hours, it was ſtill alive. This was indeed a melancholy truth: for I could plainly obſerve a tremulous motion almoſt continually agitating it, with, now and then, more diſtinguiſhable throbbings. While I was examining theſe faint indications of ſenſibility, a jolly negro wench, obſerving me, came up with a handful of ſalt, which ſhe ſprinkled all over the creature. This inſtantly produced ſuch violent convulſions, that I was no longer able to look upon a ſcene of ſo much horror, and ran ſhuddering out of the kitchen. My friend endeavoured to ſatisfy me, by ſaying that the head and heart had been cut in pieces twenty hours before; and that the whole was that inſtant to be plunged in boiling water: but it required ſome reflection, and more, or perhaps, leſs philoſophy than I am maſter of, to reconcile ſuch appearances to human feelings. I endeavoured to turn the diſcourſe by aſking what news? He anſwered, "There is a fleet arrived from the Weſt-Indies." He then ſhook his head, and looked ſerious; and after a ſuſpence, which gave room for melancholy apprehenſions, lamented that they had been very unfortunate the laſt voyage, and loſt the greateſt part of their cargo of turtles. He proceeded to inform me of the various methods which had been tried for bringing over this animal in a healthy ſtate; for that the common way had been found to waſte the fat, which was the moſt eſtimable part: and he ſpoke with great concern of the miſcarriage of a veſſel, framed like a well-boat, which had daſhed them againſt each other, and killed them. He then entered upon an explanation of a project of his own, which being out of my way, and much above my comprehenſion, took up the greateſt part of the morning. Upon hearing the clock ſtrike, he rung his bell, and aſked if his turtle-cloaths were aired. While I was meditating on this new term, and, I confeſs, unable to divine what it could mean, the ſervant brought in a coat and waiſtcoat, which my friend ſlipt on, and folding them round his body like a night-gown, declared, that though they then hung ſo looſe about him, by that time *he had ſpoke with the turtle*, he ſhould ſtretch them as tight as a drum.

Upon the firſt rap at the door, there entered a whole ſhoal of gueſts: for the turtle eater is a gregarious, I had almoſt ſaid, a ſociable animal: and I thought it remarkable,

able, that in ſo large a number, there ſhould not be one who was a whole minute later than the time: nay, the very cook was punctual; and the lady of the houſe appeared, on this extraordinary day, the moment the dinner was ſerved upon the table. Upon her firſt entrance, ſhe ordered the ſhell to be moved from the upper end of the table, declaring ſhe could not bear the ſmell, or ſight of it ſo near her. It was immediately changed for a couple of boiled chickens, to the great regret of all who ſat in her neighbourhood, who followed it with their eyes, inwardly lamenting that they ſhould never taſte one of the good bits. In vain did they ſend their plates, and ſolicit their ſhare; the plunderers who were now in poſſeſſion of both the ſhells, were ſenſible to no call but that of their own appetites, and till they had ſatisfied them, there was not one that would liſten to any thing elſe The eagerneſs, however, and diſpatch of their rapacity having ſoon ſhrunk the choice pieces, they vouchſafed to help their friends to the coarſer parts, as thereby they cleared their way for the ſearch after other delicacies; boaſting aloud all the while, that they had not ſent one good bit to the other end of the table.

When the meat was all made away with, and nothing remained but what adhered to the ſhell, our landlord, who during the whole time had taken care of nobody but himſelf, began to exerciſe his various inſtruments; and amidſt his efforts to procure himſelf more, broke out in praiſe of the ſuperior flavour of the ſpinal marrow, which he was then helping himſelf to, and for the goodneſs of which the company had his word.

The gueſts having now drank up all the gravy, and ſcraped the ſhells quite clean, the cloth was taken away, and the wine brought upon the table. But this change produced nothing new in the converſation. No hunters were ever more loud in the poſthumous fame of the hero of their ſport, than our epicures in memory of the turtle. To give ſome little variety to the diſcourſe, I aſked if they had never tried any other creature which might poſſibly reſemble this exquiſite food; and propoſed the experiment of an aligator, whoſe ſcales ſeemed to be intended by nature for the protection of green fat. I was ſtopt ſhort in my reaſoning by a gentleman, who told me, that upon trial of the aligator, there had been found ſo ſtrong a perfume in his fleſh that the ſtomach nauſeated, and could not bear it; and that this was owing to a ball of muſk, which